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CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

A Framework for Evaluating Costs, Benefits, and Effects

93-09098

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March 5, 1991

The Honorable Jo Anne B. Barnhart
Assistant Secretary for Family
    Support Administration
Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Barnhart:

Increases over the past decade in both the number and proportion of children in single-parent families living in poverty have resulted in concern about the failure of many parents to maintain financial responsibility for their children. While increased efforts to gain and enforce child support awards might yield additional collections on behalf of these children, they would surely entail additional costs as well. The ability to estimate the full costs and effects of such efforts is limited, however, by the narrow approaches of existing cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness studies.

Section 717 of title 31, U.S. Code, authorizes the Comptroller General to evaluate the results of, and develop and recommend to Congress methods for evaluating, federal programs and activities. As part of that effort, we have developed a framework for evaluating the full costs and effects of child support enforcement.[1] This framework could assist your office and others in planning and conducting studies of ongoing program operations, as well as evaluations of program changes—both past and proposed. This report presents the following results of our developmental work: (1) models of the child support enforcement system activities and our evaluation framework (appendix I) and (2) an inventory of indicators and possible measures of potential costs, benefits, and effects of child support enforcement (appendixes III-IX). Appendixes III through IX will probably be of most interest to the evaluation community and to the research and evaluation branch of your office, with whom we would be pleased to engage in additional discussion of these materials.

This framework and the measures can be used by analysts to support a wide variety of analyses (see appendix II), including

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[1]Last year, we published a plan to evaluate another complex program. See U. S. General Accounting Office, Partnership Projects: A Framework for Evaluating Public-Private Housing and Development Efforts, GAO/PEMD-90-9 (Washington, D.C.: May 22, 1990).

- cost-benefit studies of an entire system or a functional component of program operation,
- cost-effectiveness studies where the measures of outcomes or effects cannot be put in monetary terms,
- prospective analyses to examine the likely effects of changes in either program operations or caseload characteristics, and
- comparative (cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness) analyses of either existing systems or different strategies for conducting the same functional activity.

Background

As you know, the child support enforcement program, established under title IV, part D of the Social Security Act (the IV-D program), was designed to strengthen state and local efforts to find absent parents, establish paternity, obtain child support orders, and collect support payments, under the administration of your office. Initially, the primary focus of the IV-D program was on providing a range of assistance, including enforcement, to families receiving cash assistance from the Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) program, in order to return the responsibility for ensuring adequate support of children from the government to the parents, both present and absent. The Child Support Enforcement Amendments of 1984 (Public Law 98-378) and the Family Support Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-485) clarified that services would be made available to non-AFDC families and required the states to implement measures considered likely to enhance child support collections.

Enforcement activities are carried out primarily by state and county child support agencies in concert with other public and private institutions—for example, state courts, tax collection agencies, and private businesses (through automatic wage-withholding, for instance). Their activities also affect other public programs (for example, through collections offsetting AFDC program expenditures) and individuals (most obviously by transferring income from the absent parent to the custodial parent). However, the studies of the child support enforcement system we reviewed often failed to consider the costs borne by private individuals or by agencies not directly responsible for enforcement (see the attached bibliography). Nor did they regularly account for the effects that increasingly vigorous enforcement might have on family relations or on the private businesses called upon to assist in that enforcement. Thus, while efficiency and effectiveness analyses of program operations

are, of course, also needed, a comprehensive analysis of the child support enforcement system's costs and effects should explicitly consider this wider range of actors.

The Evaluation Framework

The framework we present in appendix I integrates three perspectives in which the costs and effects of the child support program may be viewed. First, we review the major functional activities of the child support enforcement system. This perspective can be used to show the various paths families might take through the program and presents the program both as a whole and in its components. This model of the paths reveals considerable variation among families. For example, a family that had already obtained a support order would flow through the system in a much different way than one that had not. A family entering through AFDC would typically follow a much different path than a non-AFDC family. We identify six functional activities—intake, locate, paternity, support order, enforcement, and collections processing.

Second, we consider the different outcomes of the child support enforcement system, which we have characterized as costs, benefits, and effects. Costs represent expenditures associated with program operations and other aspects of the system. Benefits are results expressed in monetary terms as actual or derived values, such as the dollar amount of the collections. Effects cannot be expressed in monetary terms but can be quantified, such as the length of check-processing delays. Although these outcomes are not exhaustive—others, such as qualitative, might also be targeted by evaluators and policymakers—an ability to deal with these three satisfactorily would, we believe, constitute notable progress in the assessment of this complex program.

Third, we consider these outcomes at each of three levels or domains of action: the (IV-D) program, public, and private domains. The public domain includes public institutions not directly reimbursed by the IV-D program. (We use the term public for convenience; "other public" would be more precise, since IV-D program costs represent public expenditures as well.) Thus, a study of total system costs could examine costs to the IV-D program, such as time spent by agency personnel locating a father, as well as other public costs, such as any court costs that were not reimbursed by the federal program. The private domain is comprised of elements associated with both individuals and businesses. An example of a private cost would be the cost to an employer of processing a separate check for automatic wage withholding. Appendix II reviews some of the uses of this framework.

Appendixes III through IX provide—as illustrations—both indicators and actual measures associated with the various potential costs, benefits, and effects throughout a matrix of outcomes. For example, a cost indicator "time spent to locate an absent parent" could be measured as "number of staff hours multiplied by salary per hour." We based our development of these models and the indicators on a critical review of literature and program materials, as well as interviews with program officials, researchers, and others knowledgeable about the program.

By including costs and monetary effects (i.e., benefits) in our framework, we do not mean to imply that cost-benefit analysis is the only or most appropriate way to judge the merit of this (or any other) program. We focused this study on identifying the information needs of cost-benefit analyses because with increasing constraints on public budgets, the comprehensiveness of such analyses gain importance.

Using the framework to analyze or evaluate a program will, of course, require both understanding of the policy process and technical expertise in order to set the purpose and scope of the review, select and collect the relevant evidence, judge the technical adequacy of that evidence, and synthesize the results to form judgments about the program's merit or expected effects. (We do not address in this report the details of how to conduct cost-benefit, cost-effectiveness, prospective, or comparative analyses because there is an extensive literature on these topics.) We hope this framework will be of use in developing more comprehensive and rigorous analyses of the child support enforcement system.

Views of Agency Officials

Officials of the Office of Child Support Enforcement provided oral comments on a draft of this report. They expressed three general concerns: (1) cost-benefit analysis is incompatible with the goals of the child support enforcement program because, by restricting concern to monetary outcomes, it emphasizes dollar collections over the meeting of legal and moral obligations; (2) some important outcomes—because they are difficult to quantify—will be excluded from such analyses, giving a potentially misleading assessment of the program; and (3) costs borne outside the program are inappropriate to include as part of child support enforcement. With regard to the first concern, the Office of Child Support Enforcement has made public its own expenditures-to-collections calculations (one approach to cost-benefit analysis) and this framework should help the agency to report more complete information. Also, we emphasize that cost-benefit analysis is one but not the only method that could be used in evaluating this or any other program. The framework is

sufficiently broad—including nonmonetary program effects as well as monetary benefits—that many of these other evaluation criteria are already included as elements in our framework. At the same time, if a future study based upon our framework does not find the program to be cost-effective, that would not lessen the legal and moral requirements that absent parents support their children. Rather, such a hypothetical study should be useful in pointing out where program improvements might be made to increase the efficiency of the program.

With respect to the second concern, the measurement of some outcomes is more developed than that of others. Dollar collections are fairly straightforward to measure; the measurement of the self-esteem of children is more complex but still reasonably well advanced in the research literature, while other measures may be less developed. We have deliberately included outcomes that are important to consider while difficult to quantify. Thus in appendix I, we suggest that analysts may want to consult with experts in dealing with measures like psychological or societal effects.

On the third concern, program officials may not be concerned about private sector costs and effects; nevertheless, they are appropriate for some research questions. For example, a study of the impact of the child support enforcement program upon employers could not be done without the private sector elements of the framework.

Program officials also pointed out that data on many of the indicators is not readily available and would be prohibitively costly to collect. We agree that the value of the information provided should be weighed against the cost of new data collection. Our purpose was to enumerate the indicators implied by the complexity of program operations and their potential effects in a compartmentalized structure so that, if one wished, an analyst could use the framework to address very narrow questions as well as broader ones.

Copies of this report will be sent to the Senate Finance Committee, the House Ways and Means Committee, the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. In addition, we will make copies available to others upon request.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please call me at (202) 275-1854 or Robert L. York, Acting Director of Program
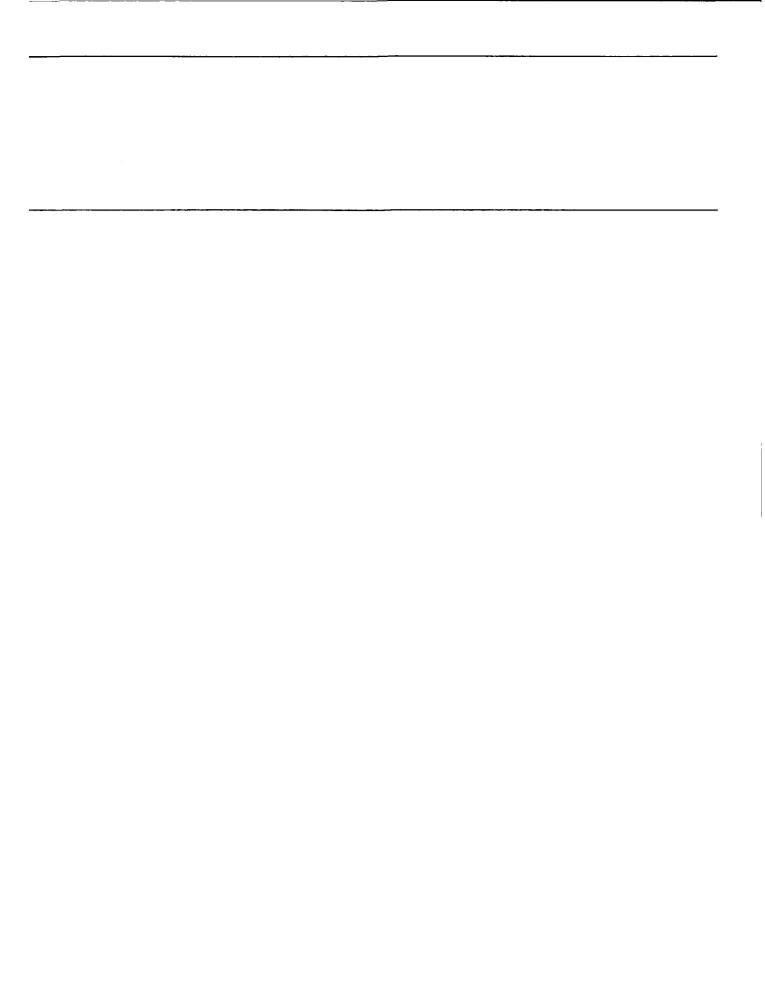
Evaluation in Human Services Areas, at (202) 275-5885. Other major contributors to this report are listed in appendix XI.

Sincerely yours,

Eleanor Chelimsky
Assistant Comptroller General

Contents

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Abbreviations

AFDC	Aid to Families With Dependent Children
FFP	federal financial participation
FPLS	Federal Parent Locator Service
GAO	General Accounting Office
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
IV-A	Title IV, part A of the Social Security Act
IV-D	Title IV, part D of the Social Security Act
SPLS	State Parent Locator Service
URESA	Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act

Identifying and Measuring Costs, Benefits, and Effects Within the Child Support Enforcement System

The child support enforcement system operates to ensure that absent parents support their children. In this report, we consider the system to include, first, persons who are paid salaries through title IV, part D (IV-D) of the Social Security Act. The IV-D program assists in locating absent parents, obtaining child support orders, and the like. Second, the complete system also includes other public agencies—such as courts—that do related work but are not always reimbursed by the federally supported system. Third, the effort to ensure the well-being of children with absent parents clearly includes a range of private stakeholders such as the parents who are affected, the children in question, second families established by a spouse after a divorce, and employers who may be required to deduct child support payments from paychecks.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

The objective of this study was to develop an evaluation framework to systematically identify the potential costs, benefits, and effects of the entire child support enforcement system and an inventory of specific measures for each of these identified costs, benefits, and effects. The intent was to provide the framework and inventory in order to help researchers and evaluators design and prepare the instrumentation for a variety of studies addressing issues of costs, benefits, and effects of child support enforcement activities. Costs represent resource expenditures associated with program operations and public and private sector outlays that are expressed in monetary terms. Benefits can be expressed in monetary terms as actual or derived values. Effects cannot be expressed in monetary terms, although they should be quantifiable. (Nonquantifiable outcomes are not readily incorporated in cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analyses, which are the focus of this report.)

In order to develop the evaluation framework, we reviewed numerous sources of information and consulted with various experts. The models and specific indicators included in the framework resulted from analysis of the following: (1) other studies of child support enforcement, (2) reports by the General Accounting Office on the cost-benefits of other federal programs and on child support enforcement, and (3) documents and reports from the Office of Child Support Enforcement.[1] We then reviewed the information about the various components of the child support system and conducted interviews with federal, state, and county officials, researchers, and others familiar with the program.

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[1]See U.S. General Accounting Office reports Computer Matching: Assessing Its Costs and Benefits, GAO/PEMD-87-2 (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 10, 1986), and Reduction in Force Can Sometimes Be More Costly to Agencies Than Attrition and Furlough, GAO/PEMD-85-6 (Washington, D.C.: July 24, 1985).

From these, we completed the model of the program, reviewed our methodology with experts, and developed a preliminary list of indicators. This list of indicators was discussed with selected state and county officials to ascertain their appropriateness and inclusiveness. The comprehensive list of indicators was reviewed by a panel of external experts (listed in appendix X). Our work was performed in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Conceptual Foundation for the Evaluation Framework

We represent the child support enforcement system in a flow model consisting of six functional activities that typically are intended to culminate in the collection of child support payments. These activities and the various pathways that typically link them are represented in figure I.1.

Figure I.1: Flow Model of Child Support Enforcement Program Activities

We provide brief descriptions of these functions, here; more detailed summaries precede the relevant inventory sections in appendixes III-IX.

1. Client intake involves opening a case record and compiling data on the custodial family and absent parent. The caseload is composed of two distinct groups: (a) AFDC cases that are required to participate in the IV-D program as a result of their receipt of AFDC and (b) non-AFDC cases (often referred by courts) whose participation is voluntary. In addition, interstate cases involve referrals to or from another state.

2. Parent locator services encompass efforts at the local, state, and federal levels to identify an absent parent's address, Social Security number, place of employment, or the like. This might include efforts to directly contact individuals or agencies or to conduct computer tape matches through, for example, the Federal Parent Locator System. Private credit agencies, state and federal income tax agencies, and others may become involved in parent locator activities.

3. Paternity establishment is the identification of the legal father of a child. This process usually is resolved in the courts or expedited through hearings in a quasi-judicial or administrative body. Paternities are established in either of two ways: (1) through a voluntary acknowledgment by the father or (2) if the case is contested, through a determination based on scientific and testimonial evidence.

4. Support order establishment involves the development of a support award that legally obliges the noncustodial parent to pay child support. The process for establishing the award and the mechanism for determining a payment amount vary from state to state.

5. Enforcement refers to a wide array of techniques at the disposal of the local IV-D agency to enforce the payment of delinquent accounts (arrears) or to ensure regularity and completeness of current accounts. These techniques include bonds and security deposits, federal and state tax intercepts, garnishments, liens, and wage withholding, among others.

6. Collections processing refers to the processing, recording, and distributing of child support collections from the absent parent.

The flow model helps describe and classify the flow of cases through the various activities. A study that includes costs, benefits, and effects associated with specific child support enforcement activities and clusters of

activities can be modeled using this flow diagram, although such models can become fairly complex, depending upon the study questions.

We illustrate the use of the model with examples of the case of an unmarried couple and that of a married couple. Before the IV-D agency can make a collection in an unmarried case, it may have to locate the putative father, as well as establish paternity, obtain a support order, and perhaps implement some form of enforcement activity. This suggests that such a case—and research questions about such clients—can be expected to include elements of most of the boxes in the model. In contrast, where a couple gained a support order with their divorce, the IV-D agency might conduct only locator activities and some form of enforcement activity to obtain a collection. In some cases, the agency may function only as a collection and disbursement point without performing any collateral functions. Married-couple cases may also require less involvement with the court system. Thus, the extent and type of activities performed by a IV-D agency is greatly affected by the mix of clients it serves.

A case's flow through this model is also likely to be affected by whether it entered the child support program as a condition of participation in the AFDC program. These cases are typically referred by the local welfare agency and are often called "IV-A" cases, referring to title IV, part A of the Social Security Act, which authorizes the AFDC program. Among AFDC cases, we frequently encounter unwed mothers without support orders. Not only might these cases require a different set of services than non-AFDC cases, but also the collections received from AFDC and non-AFDC cases are handled differently. When a collection is made for non-AFDC cases, the state only processes the money and passes it on to the custodial parent (although a small fee can be charged). In contrast, a portion of AFDC collections are retained by the state to offset welfare costs.

The Evaluation Framework for the Child Support Enforcement System

We array the flow model with two other variables—the three dimensions of costs, benefits, and effects plus the three domains in which those dimensions can be found: program, public, and private—to form the evaluation framework. Figure I.2 presents this evaluation framework in matrix form. The first application of the framework would be to array indicators for the cells in the matrix. We have not included these indicators in the matrix in order to save space. If we had, the upper left corner cell would have included, as costs of the intake function for the program domain, the staff time to process

- IV-A cases,
- non-AFDC cases,
- continuance of services notices to former AFDC cases, and
- incoming interstate cases.

Figure I.2: Matrix of Elements in the Evaluation Framework for Child Support Enforcement

Domain	Dimension	Functional Activities						Collection Outcomes
		Client Intake	Parent Locate	Paternity Establishment	Support Order Establishment	Enforcement	Collections Processing	
Program	Costs							
	Benefits							
	Effects							
Public	Costs							
	Benefits							
	Effects							
Private	Costs							
	Benefits							
	Effects							

The complete list of indicators for all cells is included in the tables appearing in appendixes III-IX. Note that the elements include the six functional activities associated with the flow model. To this we add a seventh category, collection outcomes: the actual payment of child support (as distinguished from collections processing). For purposes of exposition, we created a separate category for outcomes associated with dollar collections simply because collections generally represent the outcome of the entire enforcement process, rather than the direct result of

a single activity. By designating collections as a separate category, we do not intend to elevate their importance over other outcomes.

The Inventory of Costs, Benefits, and Effects of the Child Support Enforcement System

We have also derived measures of the various indicators and included them in this evaluation framework. That is, the inventory is a comprehensive listing of indicators and possible measures of potential costs, benefits, and effects, organized by functional activity. This information is provided in appendixes III-IX, organized by functional activity. Because we wanted to ensure the comprehensiveness of the inventory, we attempted to tap the concerns of a wide variety of stakeholders without evaluating the size or extent of the purported effects. Therefore, our inclusion of particular indicators should not be construed as denoting that such outcomes have, in fact, been demonstrated.

For many indicators in the inventory, the measures are self-explanatory; that is, they directly represent the indicator. However, other indicators are more complex. For example, costs associated with establishing paternity may include, in part, costs associated with some cases contesting paternity. Measures for this indicator include (1) additional administrative and court personnel hours times the hourly salary, (2) additional staff hours times the hourly salary, and (3) additional costs of hearing the case (jurors' fees, other charges for the use of the court, and expert testimony charges). Similarly, because procedures and organizational structures vary across states, the allocation of specific indicators to particular domains may need to be tailored for a specific study.

For certain indicators, such as those dealing with hypothesized psychological or societal effects, it has been difficult to develop credible, quantifiable measures. For example, while there are several instruments designed to measure the self-esteem of children, a special study would be required to assess the potential effects of paternity establishment on their self-esteem. In our process of developing these indicators, we attempted to identify all relevant costs, benefits, and effects that might be attributed to child support enforcement. Some measures are clearly implied by the indicator. However, for other indicators, we chose measures that in our best judgment were representative of that indicator, recognizing that additional methodological work or special evaluative studies may be required. This is to alert the analyst that our list of indicators in these areas must be used with some discrimination. Analysts may want to consult additional literature or experts, particularly when dealing with psychological or societal effects.

How to Use the Evaluation Framework and Inventory

The elements of the evaluation framework and the inventory are intended to support cost-benefit, cost-effectiveness, and other analyses of child support enforcement. Although many of the applications of our model would be to cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness types of questions, this report does not discuss how to conduct such analyses because there are many available texts on that subject. Our framework permits the design of various types of complex analyses because it partitions cost, benefit, and effect indicators by program function and domain, which can then be aggregated across different dimensions. Therefore, the framework enables partitioned analyses that take into account differential costs, benefits, and effects among (1) functional activities (such as locator services and enforcement), (2) different caseload groups (for example, AFDC versus non-AFDC, never married versus separated and divorced), and (3) different domains (such as program, public, and private). In addition, the framework can be used to conduct "what if" (forecasting) and sensitivity analyses of single systems to examine the effects of proposed changes in operating or caseload parameters.

The broadest use of this work would be to answer questions about the overall cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness of child support enforcement at the federal or state level. For example, a researcher may wish to determine the cost-benefit of the child support enforcement effort nationwide, including both the IV-D program and the public domain but excluding the private domain. Since this question is sufficiently broad to incorporate all components of the framework (except the private domain), the entire framework and inventory serve as a guide for mapping out the data elements needed above and beyond aggregate program costs and collections.

Program officials noted, and we agree, that some important goals of the program are not monetary, such as fulfillment of parents' moral and legal obligations. We do not propose that this program be judged on the basis of cost-benefit analyses alone, as that would imply that collecting large dollar amounts from a few obligors is preferable to collecting small amounts from the preponderance of obligors, for the same resource expenditure. Policymakers need to weigh the importance of monetary benefits, such as collection receipts, against nonmonetary effects, such as breadth of client coverage, when making overall judgments about program operations. Cost-benefit (and cost-effectiveness) analysis, however, can also be used to inform program planning by identifying sources of large program costs or "bottlenecks" in yielding effects, and thus assist in the strategic redeployment of resources.

Other, narrower research questions may make somewhat more intricate uses of the framework. Suppose, for example, that a state wanted to examine the costs and benefits of expedited processing, which is the use of administrative or quasi-judicial mechanisms for such activities as paternity and support order establishment. Here the analyst could use the flow model (figure I.1) to help frame the study design. Obviously, the analyst would need to consider costs and benefits associated with the paternity and support order functions (including measures specified in appendixes V and VI, respectively). Enforcement-related activities would only be considered if there were reason to believe that those activities might be different under expedited processing compared with regular processing. The flow model (by showing the paths) and the inventory (by listing the indicators) could both be useful in making such design decisions.

The analyst could adopt any of a variety of different data collection strategies. The "caseload" approach involves analyzing aggregate caseload data from the program or state level. Caseload data, for example, regarding the number of cases requiring paternity establishment, the number established, and the number of these that resulted in collections can yield "average" case figures from which informed estimates of cost and benefit flows can be made. For many indicators, however, reliable data may not be readily available. The "case record" approach abstracts data on individual cases from the case files or collects new data on a sample of entering cases, for example. From these data, the analyst would be able to accurately determine the actual flow and mix of costs and benefits across indicators from various functional activities case by case. For other indicators, special studies of program clients' experiences outside the program would be required. The specific data collection strategy adopted depends on various factors, such as (1) budget and time constraints, (2) the adequacy and reliability of case record data, (3) the ease of obtaining individual case record data, and (4) the desired precision of the analysis.

We do not imply from our listing of highly detailed indicators that we recommend engaging in new data collection to answer all of these questions. Rather the purpose of conducting the cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis should guide the determination of which indicators are most relevant. Then, before undertaking new data collection, one should weigh the value of that information for decision-making purposes against the costs of acquiring it. It is important to note where information is not available because that may raise questions about whether

certain assumptions about program operations or influence are, in fact, well-founded.

Example 1: Analyzing the Costs and Benefits to the State IV-D Program of Paternity Establishment Efforts

Paternity establishment is a key component in the child support enforcement process. On the one hand, the alleged father of a child must be identified as the legal father before a support order can be awarded and enforced. On the other hand, most of the monetary benefit that arises from paternity establishment presupposes that other award and enforcement activities are successfully completed. Therefore, a determination of the full costs and benefits of paternity to the state program must include these follow-up activities as well.

The first step in the design process involves identifying the relevant pathways and flows associated with paternity establishment in figure I.1. From our knowledge of the child support program, we know that paternity establishment does not directly lead to a collection but involves other intermediate steps, such as support order establishment and perhaps some form of enforcement. Each of these functional activities represents potential costs and benefits that must be accounted for. In addition, the model can help determine the following: (1) how many cases proceed through each subsequent activity, including collections; (2) what types of costs and benefits can be associated with each activity (see indicators in appendixes III-VIII); and (3) how many cases drop out of the system at each subsequent stage and cease to incur further costs but also do not yield any benefits (such as collections).

Obviously, for this example we must include all program costs of paternity establishment and related follow-up activities. The analyst should refer to appendix V for a comprehensive list of potential cost and benefit measures directly associated with paternity establishment activities. If we look to the cost category and then move down to the program domain, we find the following elements: caseworker staff time (plus administrative overhead), the adjudication process in the courts (assuming there is a cooperative agreement in the state) or administrative body, blood tests, and the process of contesting the paternity, if applicable.

Determining the full costs of paternity cases must also take into account that successfully establishing paternity usually has additional consequences for the program. (Subsequent agency costs to effect payment may range from minimal to considerable, depending on whether fathers voluntarily agree to pay, deny paternity, or seek to avoid detection.) For

cases that proceed to have a support order established and possibly are subject to some form of enforcement technique, we should include program costs incurred for each subsequent activity. The analyst should then refer to those respective activities in appendixes VI-VIII for the corresponding cost elements.

The process of determining benefits is similar to that of identifying costs. The analyst should refer to the same activities in appendixes V-VIII for which costs were determined. It is important that benefits should be derived only for cases in which a paternity cost is identified— that is, we do not want to claim benefits for more cases than were used to determine costs.

The only benefits listed under paternity establishment are Social Security benefits, armed forces allowances, life insurance, and inheritance. These are the only benefits identified that result directly from the act of establishing paternity, independent of any child support collections. If they exist, or can be anticipated at some future time, they should be included in the analysis. No direct benefits are seen to flow from the remaining activities, such as support order establishment and enforcement, other than collections.

In order to determine the primary program benefits to the state IV-D program, the analyst should refer to appendix IX, which includes the indicators for collection outcomes. In addition, the analyst should be mindful that there are separate benefit listings for AFDC and non-AFDC cases.

The benefits to the state IV-D program are largely determined by the number of AFDC and non-AFDC cases in the caseload. Collections made on behalf of non-AFDC cases essentially pass through the state because they are distributed directly to the family. The only benefit to the state arising from non-AFDC collections, other than fees for services, comes from federal incentive payments to the state based on the volume of such collections and the ratio of non-AFDC collections to total administrative costs.

The state program accrues benefits from AFDC collections in two ways. First, the state retains its share of child support payments from fathers of children in AFDC (less the first $50 collected— the "$50 disregard") to offset program and welfare expenditures. Second, the federal administering agency pays (out of its share of collections) certain incentives to the state based on the volume of these collections and the ratio of AFDC

collections to total administrative costs. (Whether these are classified as program or public benefits depends on whether the state earmarks these funds for IV-D purposes or for the general fund.)

Example 2: Determining the Cost-Effectiveness of Enforcement Techniques in Terms of Broadening Compliance

A state program director might be interested in determining the cost-effectiveness of a certain enforcement technique (such as wage with-holding or credit agency reporting) and perhaps making comparisons among various county programs. Cost-effectiveness would be a useful technique to evaluate program operations when the focus of the analysis is on nonmonetary effects, such as the breadth of compliance, rather than on the amount of collections. In this example, we might define the effect as the proportion of the caseload making timely and complete payment of child support.

The first step in the design process should involve identifying the relevant pathways and flows associated with this particular enforcement technique. From the flow model (figure I.1), it can be determined that there are few, if any, intervening functional activities between an enforcement technique and collection outcomes. Therefore, we will probably be able to rule out costs of paternity, support order establishment, and the like from the analysis. In addition, the model highlights the need for the analyst to determine how many cases are subject to this enforcement technique and how many are successful in terms of obtaining a collection.

The next step involves identifying relevant costs. Appendix VII provides a comprehensive list of enforcement costs. If we look to the cost category and then move to the program domain, we find the following elements: caseworker staff time (plus administrative overhead), the adjudication process in the courts (assuming there is a cooperative agreement in the state) or administrative body, serving notice, law enforcement personnel to serve a notice (if applicable), and the like.

unctional Description, Data Elements, and idicators Related to Client Intake

nctional Description

The IV-D caseload is composed of two distinct groups, AFDC and non-AFDC cases. AFDC cases are families that are enrolled in the AFDC program and whose participation in the IV-D program is mandatory as long as the custodial parent continues to receive public assistance.[1] AFDC parents assign their child support rights (less the first $50 collected) to the state to offset welfare payments. In addition, the IV-D program assumes the costs associated with establishing a paternity and support order, as well as enforcement activities, for the AFDC cases. In contrast, program participation for non-AFDC families is for the most part voluntary (except in certain states where all divorce cases are required to enter into the IV-D program). Currently, non-AFDC parents may be required to pay a fee of up to $25 to the state agency as compensation for enforcement services rendered. The state does not retain any collections made on behalf of the non-AFDC family.

Intake involves opening a case record and compiling data on the custodial family and absent parent from various sources. For AFDC cases, clients are referred to IV-D from the IV-A (AFDC) agency. Nationally, the majority of IV-D cases entered the program through this IV-A mechanism. Non-AFDC families must file for IV-D services directly with the state agency. A third source of clients is referral from another IV-D agency in a state in which the custodial parent lives. This type of case is called an interstate case and may be either an AFDC or a non-AFDC family.

In interstate cases, the problem of enforcement is compounded because state laws regarding child support are often not comparable and are inconsistent. The interstate procedure used most often to establish and enforce interstate child support cases is based on the Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act (URESA).[2] This model act, which was developed in 1950 and revised in 1968, provides a uniform process of using the courts of another state for child support purposes. URESA includes a two-state legal proceeding. The proceeding begins with the filing of a petition in the court of the custodial parent's state. If the judge in the initiating state decides that certain procedural and jurisdictional criteria are met, the proceeding is certified to the proper court in the noncustodial parent's responding state, where the support obligation

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[1]Certain mothers are able to avoid engaging in paternity establishment and other activities if they can show "good cause" for not pursuing the absent father.

[2]Another interstate mechanism includes "long-arm" statutes, which in some instances, allow the custodial parent's state to assert jurisdiction over a noncustodial parent living in a different state. In effect, long-arm statutes allow legal proceedings to take place in a custodial parent's state. These statutes are common in the area of establishing support orders, less common in the area of establishing paternity.

may be established and enforced. All states and the District of Columbia
have adopted laws based on URESA, but some states modified or omitted
certain sections of the model act in order to conform with existing proce-
dures and enforcement techniques. Subsequent amendments to and revi-
sions of the model act have been adopted by some states and not by
others.

The 1984 amendments (Public Law 98-378) contained several provisions
aimed at improving interstate enforcement, including (1) mandating the
use of collections techniques, such as wage withholding; (2) requiring
expedited processes under state judicial or administrative systems to
establish and enforce child support; and (3) providing for incentive pay-
ments to be made to both states involved in interstate cases. In addition,
states were required by regulation to establish a central registry respon-
sible for receiving, distributing, and responding to inquiries on all
incoming interstate child support enforcement cases, including URESA
petitions and requests for wage withholding. Moreover, the Family Sup-
port Act of 1988 requires the states to establish automated statewide
comprehensive case tracking and monitoring systems and mandates the
establishment of a commission to study interstate child support estab-
lishment and enforcement.

Data Elements

In this section, we provide some basic descriptive data about administra-
tive and caseload matters related to the intake function. There are three
primary uses for this information. First, it constitutes baseline data that
will be useful for describing this particular functional activity or the
total system. Second, these data will be used analytically to determine
(1) the mix of cases and (2) the flow and magnitude of costs, benefits,
and effects. Third, they may be useful in framing the research questions
for a study of the child support system.

Additional data elements might be necessary for a specific design or if
the process is subdivided further. The data elements for this function
(and general purposes) include the following.

- Total IV-D cases;
- total AFDC and foster care cases;
- total non-AFDC cases;
- total AFDC arrears-only cases;
- AFDC good-cause claims;
- AFDC good-cause claims substantiated;

- total expenditures, by function: paternity, locate, support order establishment, enforcement, and collections processing;
- total number of staff, by IV-D staff and by cooperative agreement;
- total salary and fringe for IV-D staff and under cooperative agreements;
- federal staff and salaries;
- total IV-D administrative expenditures, both federal and state share;
- federal incentive payments;
- total non-AFDC fees and costs recovered;
- number of "ever-marrieds" (divorced and separated) and "never-marrieds" in the AFDC and non-AFDC caseloads.

Tables III.1-III.3 provide examples of indicators of outcomes associated with the intake process.

III.1: Costs Associated With Intake

Domain	Indicator	Measures
Program	Staff time to process IV-A cases	Number of hours x salary per hour
	Staff time to process non-AFDC cases	Number of hours x salary per hour
	Staff time to process continuance of services notices to former AFDC cases	Number of hours x salary per hour
	Staff time to process incoming interstate cases	Number of hours x salary per hour
Public	Federal costs of interface between IV-A and IV-D	AFDC processing costs at intake (to obtain information relevant to child support enforcement)
		Other costs (such as management information system, paper handling)
Private	Personal reluctance or unwillingness to participate in a public welfare program (i.e., welfare stigma)	Whether the individual is unwilling to participate in the IV-D program because of an attitude against dealing with a public welfare agency

III.2: Benefits Associated With
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Domain	Indicator	Measures
Program	Processing and other fees for non-AFDC clients, if applicable	Self-explanatory
Public	Benefits to the IV-A agency	Number of AFDC applications not approved or withdrawn because of required referral to IV-D
		Number of fraud cases identified

Table III.3: Program Effects Associated With Intake

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Other program	Interface problems between IV-A and IV-D agencies	Number of IV-A cases that remain unopened by the IV-D agency
		Number of appropriate IV-A cases that are not sent to the IV-D agency

Functional Description, Data Elements, and Indicators Related to Parent Locator Services

Functional Description

The IV-D agency has the responsibility to locate alleged and acknowledged parents who are not fulfilling their financial obligation to support their children. This can include the identification of an absent parent's address, Social Security number, place of employment, location of an asset, and the like. This information is indeed critical because the IV-D agency cannot complete the subsequent steps of establishing paternity and support obligation establishment (if needed) or of collecting child support payments without it.

There are three levels of location effort—local, state, and federal. Location efforts usually begin in the local IV-D agency and focus on obtaining information about the absent parent from various community sources. These sources might include the custodial parent and close family members, local post offices, county agencies, and private organizations and businesses.

The next level of activity involves the State Parent Locator Service (SPLS), which is operated by the state IV-D agency. The SPLS maintains contacts with various state agencies and conducts computer searches of their data bases. The types of agencies include (1) motor vehicle bureaus for driver's licenses and vehicle registration; (2) employment security for information on employment, employers, and addresses; (3) tax revenue; (4) law enforcement; (5) public assistance and social services; and the like. The SPLS also acts as a clearinghouse for interstate locate efforts by submitting and receiving requests to locate an absent parent in a state other than the one in which the custodial parent resides.

If locate attempts are unsuccessful at the local and state levels, the next level involves the Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS). The FPLS is operated by the Office of Child Support Enforcement and communicates with other federal agencies to find the current addresses and places of employment of absent parents. The FPLS, upon request by the state agency, will check records with the Social Security Administration, Internal Revenue Service (IRS), National Personnel Records Center, and other agencies in order to obtain information about an absent parent's residence. This records check involves computer searches of agency data bases.

Data Elements

In this section, we provide some basic descriptive data about program and caseload matters related to the parent locator services. There are three primary uses for this information. First, it constitutes baseline data that will be useful for describing this particular functional activity

or the total system. Second, these data will be used analytically to determine (1) the mix of cases and (2) the flow and magnitude of costs, benefits, and effects. Third, the data may be useful in framing the research questions for a study of the child support system.

Additional data elements might be necessary for a specific design or if the process is subdivided further. The data elements for this function include the following.

- Number of FPLS requests made with and without Social Security numbers,
- number of absent parents located,
- number of locate techniques used per case (including follow-up if not successful on the first attempt),
- number of locates in which a collection is made or not made.

Tables IV.1 and IV.2 provide examples of indicators of outcomes associated with the locate process.

Table IV.1: Costs Associated With Location

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Program	Staff time spent to locate an absent parent (include all activities involving all levels)	Number of staff hours x salary per hour
Program and public[a]	Costs to the IV-D agency or to local or county offices and organizations involved in locate searches	Additional local locate costs for each of the indicators in the left column can be determined by (1) determining the periodic charge for the service or (2) computing the total transaction cost (cost per tape match, for instance, x frequency of the transaction)[b]
	Local post office for address verification (also might include other post offices in state or out of state)	
	County clerk's office for information on various types of transactions to determine address	
	County recorder or assessor for information on noncustodial parent's property	
	Local criminal justice agencies for information on felonies and misdemeanors to determine possible address and whether incarcerated	
	Department of vital statistics (marriage, birth, and death certificates) to determine whether alive	
	Department of social services for information on any type of assistance received	
	Department of Motor Vehicles	
	Voter registration	
	Utility companies	
	Costs to the SPLS and other state agencies involved in locate searches	
	SPLS worker time to conduct a match	Number of hours worked x salary per hour

(continued)

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Program and public[a]	Operating costs of providing SPLS service per case	Operating and other overhead costs
	Additional match costs	Additional state costs for each of the indicators in the left column can be determined by (1) determining the periodic charge for the service or (2) computing the total transaction cost (cost per tape match, for instance, x frequency of the transaction)[b]
	State motor vehicle department for information on license or vehicle registration	
	State department of taxation	
	State employment security division for information on employment, employer, and address	
	State criminal justice information systems to determine whether currently incarcerated	
	Regional locate networks and clearinghouses	
	Costs to the FPLS and other federal agencies involved in locate searches	
	Per-case operating costs of providing FPLS service	Computed per-case administrative costs for FPLS
	Additional costs	Additional federal locate costs for each of the indicators in the left column can be determined by (1) determining the periodic charge for the service or (2) computing the total transaction cost (cost per tape match, for instance, x frequency of the transaction)[b]
	IRS weekly match for tax information and quarterly match for 1099 information	
	INTERNET linkup with Labor Department and state income security agency network, quarterly matches	
	Department of Defense for information on pay grade and status of active and retired military personnel	
	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Public Health Service personnel, biweekly matches	
	Veterans Administration for those claiming benefits, monthly matches	
	Selective Service System for registered males 18-26, biweekly matches	
	Social Security Administration for information on number, home address, employer address, weekly match	
	National Personnel Records Center for information on federal employee status and address, biweekly match	
	Federal Bureau of Investigation for a felony arrest record	
	Immigration and Naturalization Service	
	National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System for access to motor vehicle data (for selected states)	
	Commercial data bases maintained by credit reporting companies and telephone companies	
	For interstate cases	
	Responding state's locate services	Include all locate service costs incurred by the responding states
Private	Costs borne by businesses and other organizations during a locate search (include banks, insurance companies, chambers of commerce, union locals, and others)	Cost to business or other organization responding to request from IV-D agency for information about the noncustodial parent's address or employment

[a]Costs borne or reimbursed by the child support agency are considered program costs. If they are borne by another agency or organization, they are considered a public cost.

[b]Most likely these individual search costs will be reported in an aggregated form.

Table IV.2: Program Effects Associated With Location

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Total program	Successful location of the noncustodial parent permits any or all of the following: paternity establishment, support order establishment, application of an enforcement technique, and ultimately, collections	Number of locates leading to paternity establishment
		Number of locates leading to support order establishment
		Number of locates resulting in either voluntary or enforced collections

Functional Description, Data Elements, and Indicators Related to Paternity Establishment

Functional Description

A key component of the child support enforcement program is paternity establishment. The alleged father of a child must be identified as the legal father before a child support order can be established and enforced. This process is usually resolved in the courts or in quasi-judicial or other administrative bodies, and paternity is established in either of two ways: (1) through a voluntary acknowledgment by the father or (2) through a determination based on scientific (genetic testing) and testimonial evidence, if the case is contested.

Initiation of the paternity process varies depending on whether or not the mother is an AFDC recipient. Mothers who receive AFDC assistance are required by law to cooperate in locating and identifying the father of the child for whom aid is requested or to establish a good cause for refusing to do so. Mothers who do not receive AFDC, however, are under no legal obligation to establish paternity and may voluntarily seek the services of the IV-D agency to establish paternity.

The paternity establishment process is costly in terms of administrative and court resources used to bring about and adjudicate a paternity action, as well as the testing used to establish a claim.[1] However, it is practically impossible for the IV-D agency to make collections where a legal responsibility to make them has not been established. Thus, in spite of the cost, the Family Support Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-485) places a greater emphasis on paternity establishment and requires states to meet federal standards that take into account the number of children born out of wedlock who receive case benefits or child support services.

Data Elements

In this section, we provide some basic descriptive data about program and caseload matters related to paternity establishment. There are three primary uses for this information. First, it constitutes baseline data that will be useful for describing this particular functional activity or the total system. Second, these data will be used analytically to determine (1) the mix of cases and (2) the flow and magnitude of costs, benefits, and effects. Third, the data may be useful in framing the research questions for a study of the child support system.

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[1] There is no uniformity among the states for determining who pays the costs of blood tests. It depends on who initiates the request, the outcome of the test, and the income status of the parents.

Additional data elements might be necessary for a specific design or if the process is subdivided further. The data elements for this function include the following.

- Number of paternities sought;
- number of paternities established, including number of voluntary consents before and after the blood test;
- number of disputed paternity cases;
- number of disputed cases that proceed through the courts or expedited procedures;
- number of paternities established in which a support order is established;
- number of paternities established in which collections are made.

Tables V.1-V.4 provide examples of indicators of outcomes associated with the paternity establishment process.

Table V.1: Costs Associated With Paternity Establishment

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Program	Staff time spent to establish paternity	Number of staff hours x salary per hour
	Blood test costs	Cost per blood test x number of tests conducted—reimbursed costs
	Costs incurred by court, quasi-judicial, or administrative personnel and others involved in hearings to process paternities	Administrative and court personnel hours x salary per hour
	Overhead costs	Computer and supplies charges
		Other overhead and miscellaneous charges
	Costs associated with contesting paternity[a]	Additional administrative and court personnel hours x salary per hour
		Additional staff hours x salary per hour
		Additional costs of hearing the case — juror's fees (if applicable) — other overhead charges for use of court — expert testimony
	Service of process costs	Staff time x salary per hour
	Legal costs	In-house legal staff time x salary per hour or district attorney or attorney general costs (if under a cooperative agreement)

(continued)

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Program	For interstate cases	
	Paternity establishment costs incurred in responding state[b]	Cost of serving summons on noncustodial parent in responding state
		Additional costs of establishing paternity in responding state
Public	Law enforcement personnel used during a hearing	Number of hours x salary per hour (for support investigators, sheriffs, etc.)
	Judges and other legal personnel during a hearing	Number of hours x salary per hour (for judges and district attorney or attorney general, if there is no cooperative agreement)
Private	Blood tests	Cost per blood test x number of tests conducted—not reimbursed by IV-D agency
	Attorney fees	Self-explanatory
	Time spent in court or other administrative body	Wages lost (or time involved x estimate of value of personal time)
	Travel and telephone costs, especially for interstate cases	Self-explanatory

[a]If paternity is contested, the following costs may be recorded: (1) district attorney or county attorney costs (involves interviewing mother, preparing the case for court, and actually taking the case to court), (2) attorney's fees for father, (3) cost of pretrial hearings and court hearings (may include a trial by jury) and expert testimony costs, and (4) transportation costs for witnesses.

[b]Determine whether the paternity activities in the responding state were conducted under the jurisdiction of URESA or under a long-arm statute.

Table V.2: Benefits Associated With Paternity Establishment

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Private	Potential monetary benefits include	
	Social Security benefits	Number of cases in which benefits received
		Amount of benefits received
	Armed services allowances	Number of cases in which allowances received
		Amount of armed services allowances received
	Life insurance	Number of cases in which life insurance received
		Amount of insurance received
	Inheritance	Number of cases in which inheritance received
		Amount of inheritance received

Table V.3: Program Effects Associated With Paternity Establishment

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Total program	Establishment of paternity, in combination with the establishment of a support order, theoretically permits collections (and medical support) to be obtained from noncustodial parents, either in the short term or long term	Number of paternity cases in which a support order is established
		Number of paternity cases that result in voluntary or enforced collections (including medical support)
		Number of new collections made as a result of paternities established in previous years
		(Include projected collections beyond current year, if looking at long-term benefits)
Other program	Differential effects on the rate of paternity establishment of processing paternities through the courts versus using expedited procedures[a]	Percent of paternity caseload with a successful establishment, by procedural mechanism
		Number of "no-shows" at the hearing
		Number of contested cases
		Whether or not the putative father's attitude (positive or threatened) toward the hearing affected the outcome of the proceedings
For interstate cases		
	Differential processing times and success rates between state and interstate cases	Difference in average processing times to establish paternity between state and interstate (initiated) cases
		Difference in success rates for paternity establishment between state and interstate (initiated) cases
		Difference in arrearage payment ordered between state and interstate (initiated) cases
	Differential processing times and success rates between initiating and responding interstate cases	Difference in average processing times to establish paternity between initiating and responding interstate cases
		Difference in success rates to establish paternity between initiating and responding interstate cases

[a]It has been hypothesized that expedited procedures are somewhat more consultative and less threatening than the court process.

Table V.4: Public and Private Effects Associated With Paternity Establishment

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Public	Change in male out-of-wedlock procreative behavior	Reduction in the number of out-of-wedlock births (through either a lowering of the birth rate or an increase in the marriage rate)
	Encourages idea that unmarried men are responsible for their behavior and discourages the idea that the out-of-wedlock child is solely the mother's responsibility	Increase in the number of men who voluntarily admit paternity
Private	Legal effects on the father if paternity is established	
	Establishes a right to custody of child if the mother dies or loses custody	Whether the father's right to custody of the child is exercised and recognized in custody hearing
	Establishes a right to custody of the child if the mother wishes to place the child for adoption or give up custody	Whether the father's right of parental consent is exercised and recognized in custody hearing
	Psychological and social effects on the father if he acknowledges paternity	
	Effect on his desire to assume coresponsibility for the child	Whether the father initiates contact with the child
		An increase in the frequency of father's visits to the child
		A change in the duration of visits
		Whether the father promotes contact between the child and the paternal family
		An increase in the regularity of financial support
	Social effects of public disclosure of paternity	Whether the father experiences public support or public condemnation for acknowledging paternity
		Whether, if married, his marriage experiences disruption or increased tension
	Psychological and social effects on the child if paternity is established	
	Effects on the level of identification between the child and the father	Whether the child knows the biological father's name
		Whether the child accepts the biological father and identifies with him in a familial sense
		Level of the child's self-esteem
	Effects on the level of involvement of the paternal family in the support and care of the child	Whether the paternal family members assume responsibility for caring and supporting the child
		The number of paternal family members who assume this responsibility
		The frequency of contacts between the members of the paternal family and the child
		Whether the child acknowledges that this support network is based on a paternal link
	Effects on the extent and nature of father-child contacts	Whether or not the father initiates contact with the child
		An increase in the number of visits to the child
		The duration of visits
		Whether or not the child characterizes such contacts as supportive or stressful

(continued)

nain	Indicator	Measure
ate	Effects on the child's health prospects (in cases of genetic disease)	Whether the child's health or care is improved because a linkage with an inherited disease was established
	Psychological and social effects on the mother if paternity is established	
	Effects of acknowledgment of mutual obligation and father-child contact	Whether or not the mother has a sense of relief or of intrusion about the prospect of mutual obligation and shared contact
	Effects of the prospect of contact with the father	Whether the mother encourages contacts with the father
		Whether the mother seeks to establish a "good-cause" claim during the intake process in AFDC (for AFDC cases only)
		Whether the mother moves out of the area in order to avoid contact with the father
		Whether the mother seeks to deny visitation by the father
		Number and types of contacts encouraged
	Involvement with the pat nal amily	Whether the mother supports contact with the paternal family
		The number and types of contacts encouraged between the child and the paternal family
	Psychological and social effects on purported father when paternity claim is not established	If married, whether his marriage experiences disruption or increased tension
		Whether the alleged father experiences public condemnation through the presumption of responsibility

'unctional Description, Data Elements, and ndicators Related to Support)rder Establishment

'unctional Description

Before the IV-D agency can enforce compliance, there must be a support award that legally obliges the noncustodial parent to pay child support. In the absence of such an order, the IV-D agency must assist the custodial parent to initiate an action in court or through an administrative or expedited legal process that will produce a support award. These legal processes vary from state to state.

The agency helps in the determination of a child's financial needs and the extent to which the absent parent can provide financial support and medical insurance coverage. Traditionally, the determination of a support award was based on the criteria establish by the courts. The Family Support Act of 1988 mandated that states must establish a guideline (that is, a numerical formula) to be used on a presumptive basis when determining an award. This information is then used to recommend a support amount to a judge, an administrative law judge, or other equivalent official, to make a final decision on the amount of the order.

Support obligations, once established, generally may be adjusted to reflect changes of circumstances such as the absent parent's income status; the child's age; or the mother's eligibility for AFDC, Medicaid, Food Stamps, and so on. These adjustments take place upon successful petition to the court or relevant administrative body by either of the parents. However, in 1986, IV-D program requirements were amended to prohibit retroactive modification of child support orders (Public Law 99-509, sec. 9103 (a)). The Family Support Act of 1988 mandated that states will be required to review and, as appropriate, adjust individual child support awards every 3 years for AFDC cases; automatic review will not be required for non-AFDC cases.

'ata Elements

In this section, we provide some basic descriptive data about program and caseload matters related to support order establishment. There are three primary uses for this information. First, it constitutes baseline data that will be useful for describing this particular functional activity or the total system. Second, these data will be used analytically to determine (1) the mix of cases and (2) the flow and magnitude of costs, benefits, and effects. Third, the data may be useful in framing the research questions for a study of the child support system.

Additional data elements might be necessary for a specific design or if the process is subdivided further. The data elements for this function include the following.

- Number of support orders sought;
- number of support orders established;
- whether a guideline was used in setting a support order;
- the number of support orders that include third-party medical insurance coverage for the child;
- the number of support orders that would have to be periodically updated at year 1, year 2, and so on;
- the number of support order updates that would require some form of administrative or judicial hearing;
- whether and how the noncustodial parent is credited for increased or extended visitation;
- whether the child support award takes into account the situation in which parents have joint legal or physical custody of their children;
- the amount the order is adjusted for the noncustodial parent who has physical custody of at least one child (split custody).

Tables VI.1-VI.4 provide examples of indicators of outcomes associated with the support order establishment process.

le VI.1: Costs Associated With Support Order Establishment

nain	Indicator	Measure
jram	Establishment	
	Staff time spent assessing and recommending a support order amount	Number of staff hours x salary per hour
	Costs incurred by court, quasi-judicial, or administrative personnel processing orders	Number of administrative and court personnel hours x salary per hour
	Other overhead costs incurred in processing support orders	Computer and supplies charges
		Other overhead items, if applicable
	Legal costs involved in service of process	Cost of time spent by district attorney (if under cooperative agreement) or in-house or other attorney
	Reduction in costs through use of guidelines instead of individual determinations	Comparison of per-case costs
	Medicaid and medical child support	
	Additional costs (not covered by Medicaid agency) of modifying support orders to include medical support	Number of staff hours x salary per hour
		Other overhead items, if applicable
	Revisions	
	Subsequent additional costs associated with support order revisions (because of circumstance or periodic revision requirements)	Number of staff hours x salary per hour[a]
		Number of administrative and court personnel hours x salary per hour
		Attorney costs in service of process
		Computer and supplies charges
		Other overhead items, if applicable

(continued)

)main	Indicator	Measure
ogram	For interstate cases	
	Cost of support order establishment in state 2	For each applicable measure above, include the cost incurred in state 2
		Include cost of serving summons to noncustodial parent in state 2, if applicable
	Cost of interstate communication	Self-explanatory
iblic	Cost of using a judge or other nonreimbursed hearing officer during a hearing, if applicable	Number of hours x salary per hour
ivate	Establishment	
	Costs of providing financial and other information to the deliberative body	Personal costs, such as accountant's fees, wages lost as a result of time spent collating material and xeroxing, etc. (or amount of time spent on these activities x estimate of value of personal time)
		Cost to business of providing earnings income, if applicable
	Noncustodial parent's legal fees, if applicable	Self-explanatory
	Review	
	Subsequent additional costs associated with support order reviews as a result of changing circumstances (e.g., a parent's income status) or periodic revision requirements	Personal costs, such as accountant's fees, wages lost as a result of time spent collating material and xeroxing, etc. (or amount of time spent on these activities x estimate of value of personal time)
		Cost to business of providing earnings income
		Legal fees, if applicable

[a]Include in this figure any staff time spent to monitor the support order in preparation for the periodic revision.

ble VI.2: Benefits Associated With Support Order Establishment

)main	Indicator	Measure
vate	Effect of guidelines on tax planning involving children in a divorce that may affect the total tax burden of the custodial and noncustodial parents	Difference between the tax burden of the family units before the onset of child support payments and the burden on the separate units afterward (If the difference is less than or equal to 0, include the net amount in the public and private benefit category)

Table VI.3: Program Effects Associated With Support Order Establishment

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Total	Whether the use of guidelines leads to an increase or a reduction in the "adequacy gap"—i.e., the gap between the potential amount of child support and the actual amount paid	Change in the differences between the amount of child support owed per the support order, the amount received, and the amount estimated as necessary to raise a child (combine with collections information)
	Changes in compliance as a result of applying guidelines	Difference between the compliance rate of noncustodial parents before and after implementation of the guidelines (compliance includes regularity and completeness of payments)
	Reductions in the per-case cost to jurisdictions and litigants as a result of expedited processing	Comparison of per-case costs to jurisdictions and involved parties of expedited, quasi-judicial, and court processing (if pre- and post-comparisons can be made)
Other program	Relative effects of using expedited versus judicial procedures in the establishment of a support order	Differences between the processing mechanisms in any of the following: the adversarial nature of support proceedings, a streamlining of procedures, enhancement in quality control
	The effects of using expedited versus judicial procedures in the establishment of a support order in terms of the perception of validity accorded the proceedings by parties and attorneys	Comparisons of the perception of validity accorded the support order hearings according to the parties and attorneys involved
	The effects of the revisions process on IV-D efforts to include medical child support in the support order	Increase in the number of support order revisions that contain medical child support

Table VI.4: Public and Private Effects Associated With Support Order Establishment

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Private	Establishment	
	Change in the projected economic status of the noncustodial and custodial parent families as a result of establishing a support order	Difference between the pre- and post-award projected family incomes[a]
		Change in relative position to the poverty thresholds
	Psychological effects on the custodial and noncustodial parents who know that child support can be enforced	Whether the custodial parent perceives the future as being more or less secure because of an order
		Whether the custodial parent perceives the noncustodial parent more or less favorably because of an order
		Whether the noncustodial parent perceives the future as being more or less secure because of an order
		Whether the noncustodial parent perceives the custodial parent more or less favorably because of an order
	Revisions	
	Change in the projected economic status of the custodial and noncustodial parents as a result of revising a support order	Difference between the pre- and post-adjustment projected family incomes[a]
		Change in relative position to the poverty thresholds
	Psychological effects on the custodial and noncustodial parents who know that the support order will be reviewed periodically	Whether there is parental conflict over revising the support order
		Whether the revisions process reopens parental conflict over visitation

(continued)

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Private		Whether the revisions process reopens parental conflict over custody
		Whether the custodial parent perceives the future as being more or less secure because of the revision requirement
		Whether the custodial parent perceives the noncustodial parent more or less favorably because of the revision requirement
		Whether the noncustodial parent perceives the future as being more or less secure because of the revision requirement
		Whether the noncustodial parent perceives the custodial parent more or less favorably because of the revision requirement
		Whether the parties perceive the support order more or less favorably because of the revision requirement
	Guidelines	
	The effect of implementing formulas on noncustodial parents at various income levels	Percentage of income paid in child support, by income level
		Change in relative position to the poverty thresholds
	The effects of guidelines implementation on noncustodial parents (and their families) if they are used to update or revise preexisting award obligations	Difference in pre- and post-adjustment projected family incomes
		Change in relative position to the poverty thresholds

[a]Enter this figure to denote a change in economic status but do not count this as a monetary benefit. It is counted later under collections.

Functional Description, Data Elements, and Indicators Related to Enforcement Activities

Functional Description

The IV-D agency has at its disposal a wide array of techniques to enforce the payment of delinquent accounts (arrears) or ensure regularity and completeness of current accounts. The effectiveness of these activities varies and their specific application may differ from state to state and from case to case. The range of enforcement techniques includes, but is not limited to, the following.

Bonds and security deposits are requirements placed on absent parents to guarantee and secure payment of overdue child support. Though a majority of the states have enacted legislation authorizing such procedures, they are not used very frequently.

Credit agency reporting is a technique authorized by the 1984 amendments that encourages states to provide information to reporting agencies if the amount of overdue support owed by an absent parent exceeds $1,000. States may also report cases with lower or no arrears.

Federal tax intercept (offset) involves the interception and seizure of federal tax refunds due individuals who become delinquent in paying their child support obligations. This technique is quite effective and has yielded sizable collections (equaling almost $339 million in fiscal year 1987).

Garnishment is a legal procedure allowing a creditor to seize a debtor's property, money, or credits, in the possession of a third person, and apply the property to the judgment debt. Garnishments usually are limited to the amount of the arrears due on the date of the writ. They have been used to seize wages, bank accounts, workers' compensation benefits, pension benefits, and unemployment compensation.

Liens can be imposed against real and personal property for amounts of overdue support owed by an absent parent who resides or owns property in a state. A lien prevents transfer of affected property either directly (by prohibiting a recording agency from issuing a new title or deed) or indirectly (by providing that all subsequent interests in the property will be subject to the lien). The lien may grow automatically, as an arrearage increases, and it may last as long as the underlying judgment survives.

State tax intercept involves the interception and seizure of state tax refunds due individuals who become delinquent in paying their child support obligations.

Unemployment compensation intercept involves the withholding of a
certain portion of unemployment insurance, in accordance with state
guidelines, to enforce unmet support obligations.

Wage and income withholding involves deducting a child support debt
from an employee's wages by the employer. The 1984 amendments
made wage withholding mandatory if an absent parent fell into arrears
for an amount equal to 1 month's child support. The Family Support Act
of 1988 made withholding mandatory for all IV-D and non-IV-D cases,
whether or not payments are delinquent (after January 1, 1994), unless
all parties agree otherwise.

Data Elements

In this section, we provide some basic descriptive data about program
and caseload matters related to enforcement. There are three primary
uses for this information. First, it constitutes baseline data that will be
useful for describing this particular functional activity or the total
system. Second, these data will be used analytically to determine (1) the
mix of cases and (2) the flow and magnitude of costs, benefits, and
effects. Third, the data may be useful in framing the research questions
for a study of the child support system.

Additional data elements might be necessary for a specific design or if
the process is subdivided further. The data elements for this function
include the following.

- Total cases with voluntary payments, by AFDC vs. non-AFDC;
- number of AFDC paying cases;
- number of non-AFDC paying cases;
- number of AFDC arrears-only paying cases;
- number of IRS full collections cases;
- percentage of AFDC cases in which a collection is made;
- percentage of non-AFDC cases in which a collection is made;
- percentage of AFDC arrears-only cases in which a collection is made;
- whether the state has an automated management information system to
  determine arrears amounts (proxy for accurate and timely processing).

Bonds and security deposits related:

- number of security or bond postings made;
- number of security or bond postings that result in a collection (current
  and arrears).

Credit agency reporting related:

- number of cases in which obligations were reported by the child support agency to a credit agency;
- number of cases in which current or arrears payments were paid because of a report to a credit agency.

Federal tax intercept (offset) related:

- number of tax offsets submitted by the states to IRS;
- amount of money claimed by states as part of (uncertified) offsets;
- number of cases certified at IRS;
- amount of money certified by IRS as due;
- number of cases in which a tax offset is actually made;
- percentage of cases certified for which there was a refund to offset;
- number of absent parents who resume making payments after being notified of the offset.

Garnishment of wages related:

- number of garnishments placed on wages or assets of absent parents;
- number of garnishments that result in a collection.

Liens related:

- number of liens placed on property of absent parents;
- number of liens that result in a collection.

State tax intercept related:

- number of cases in which a state tax intercept is attempted;
- number of cases in which an intercept results in a collection.

Unemployment insurance intercept:

- number of cases in which the unemployment insurance intercept is attempted;
- number of cases in which the intercept results in a collection.

Wage withholding related:

- number of cases in caseload with wage withholding active;

- whether the state has a central clearinghouse for payment processing;[1]
- whether the state has an automated financial system;
- whether the procedure to determine whether the arrears are sufficient to trigger automatic wage withholding is done by computer or manually;
- whether the IV-D agency has an automated interface with the state's employment security agency to determine the obligor's employer;[2]
- whether the state uses administrative procedures, judges, or hearing officers to activate a wage withholding order;[3]
- the repeat rate among absent parents who have a wage withholding order executed, complete paying the arrears (at which time the order is terminated), and then fall into arrears again;
- whether the state has an electronic funds transfer program to enhance payment of withholding amounts;
- the percentage of wage earning cases covered by wage withholding;[4]
- whether the state has a set of procedures for recognizing and implementing withholding orders from other states;[5]
- whether the state uses interstate wage withholding.

Tables VII.1-VII.3 provide examples of indicators of outcomes associated with the enforcement process.

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[1]Some states have central clearinghouses and sophisticated automated financial systems, which could improve their ability to determine when a case meets the criteria for mandatory withholding as well as shorten the time required to detect arrearages. In other states, there is less automated assistance for tracking payments against obligations, and in some states the process is entirely manual.

[2]Automated interfaces with other state data files such as employment security wage reporting files are considered the most reliable and cost-effective location mechanisms. Yet states have varying levels of electronic capability for identifying an obligor's current employment. The power of the state's location tools can be expected to have a significant effect on the wage withholding procedure.

[3]Some states require judges or hearing officers to sign an order, which can delay the process and lower the success rate of executed attachments.

[4]In a Wisconsin study, wage withholding was not universal for all cases of earned income; the lowest percentage of cases were those of self-employment income. Cases with unemployment insurance had immediate withholding more than the wage cases.

[5]Only two or three states have procedures for requesting income withholding from other states. This lack of statutory specification may limit the extent to which states use interstate income withholding consistently and effectively.

Table VII.1: Costs Associated With Enforcement

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Program or public	Staff time to effect each enforcement activity[a]	Number of staff hours x salary per hour
	Staff time to follow up and provide maintenance services	Number of staff hours x salary per hour
	Judges' time spent to issue writs and conduct hearings	Number of hours spent x salary per hour
	Bonds and security deposits related	
	Administrative or court costs to require a noncustodial parent in arrears to give security or post a bond	Number of administrative and court personnel hours x salary per hour
		Court overhead costs
	Administrative or court costs to provide due process to a noncustodial parent in default when the person is subject to civil contempt and the property may be sold at the direction of the court	Number of administrative and court personnel hours x salary per hour
		Court overhead costs
	Credit agency reporting related	
	Cost to IV-D agency of completing procedural requirements of notifying a credit agency of an absent parent's arrears	Cost of preparing advanced notice to the absent parent
		Cost associated with the absent parent contesting the accuracy of the information
	Federal tax intercept related	
	IRS costs of applying a federal tax intercept (for tape matching, processing, and notification services)	IRS rate for tax intercept
		IRS staff time not covered by charge to state
		Number of cases involved in tax intercept (by AFDC and non-AFDC cases)[b]
	Administrative review costs to the IV-D agency if the absent parent contests the intercept notice from IRS	Number of administrative and court personnel hours x salary per hour
	For interstate cases	
	Costs to the responding state if the absent parent contests the decision	Number of administrative and court personnel hours to process claim (both states) x salary per hour
		Administrative or court costs to process claim (both states)[c]
	Garnishment of wages related	
	State court costs to prepare a writ of execution or garnishment	Number of staff hours to prepare writ x salary per hour
		State court overhead charges
	County sheriff or other process server to serve notice of writ on the garnishee (bank, asset holder, etc.)	Number of hours x salary per hour
	Liens related	
	State court or other office to establish a lien	Number of staff hours to determine arrears and process notice x salary per hour
		Number of staff hours to serve notice x salary per hour
	If an "execution" writ is established and implemented, the cost to the sheriff or other official of seizing the property, advertising the sale, and conducting the sale	Number of law enforcement and other personnel hours to implement writ x salary per hour
		Cost of advertising and conducting sale

(continued)

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Program or public	State tax intercept related	
	State tax agency in cases of a tax intercept	Number of state personnel hours x salary per hour to — produce a list of certified cases — mail notices — resolve contested issues — account and post refunds intercepted
		Other charges to process above
	Unemployment insurance related	
	State unemployment insurance agency in cases of unemployment insurance intercept	Number of state personnel hours x salary per hour to — produce a list of certified cases — mail notices — resolve contested issues — account and post refunds intercepted
		Other charges to process above
	Wage withholding related	
	Cost of (judicial or administrative) hearing if the noncustodial parent disputes the facts in a wage withholding situation	Number of staff hours to prepare for hearing x salary per hour
		Number of administrative or court personnel hours to conduct hearing x salary per hour
		Other charges related to hearing
	Maintenance costs to prepare documents and to monitor wage withholding	Amount of staff time x salary per hour
	Cost of using judges or hearing officers to sign a wage withholding order[d]	Number of administrative or court personnel hours x salary per hour
	Costs of serving notice	Self-explanatory
	For interstate cases	
	Cost of relevant wage withholding measures incurred in the responding state agency	Self-explanatory
	Other	
	Receivers to collect money	Self-explanatory
	IRS collection costs[e]	Number of staff hours x salary per hour
		Processing costs
Private	Bonds and security deposits related	
	Cost to self-employed noncustodial parents, whose business has been put under receivership	Processing costs of putting business under receivership[f]
	Credit agency reporting related	
	Cost to credit bureaus for processing information provided by the IV-D agency on overdue support amounts	Self-explanatory
	Garnishment of wages related	
	Cost to the garnishee of transferring the asset to the server	Self-explanatory

(continued)

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Private	Wage withholding related	
	Employer costs	Include costs such as postage and processing charges
	Fees paid by the noncustodial parent to the employer for processing	Self-explanatory
	Other	
	Absent parent's legal costs for any contested judgments or rulings	Self-explanatory

[a]This also includes time to enforce medical child support, especially for the Medicaid-only cases. However, subtract the portion that is reimbursed by the Medicaid agency.

[b]For non-AFDC cases, a charge may be passed on to the parent, in which case allocate the charge to the noncustodial parent category but reduce payment to the custodial parent for that amount.

[c]In interstate cases, if a review of a dispute of the offset by the absent parent in the submitting state does not resolve the dispute, the absent parent can request a hearing in the state that established the order. In such cases, the submitting state must notify the state that established the order and provide all the necessary documents.

[d]Although the 1984 amendments call for activation of the order through the IV-D agency, this has not been implemented in all states.

[e]IRS can seize property, freeze accounts, or use other regular collection processes to obtain collections from a noncustodial parent if the amount certified for collection is at least $750. This is not used very often, and in fiscal year 1988, only $464,000 was collected this way.

[f]Receivers deduct their expenses and fee from the company profit; the remainder is turned over to the custodial parent.

Table VII.2: Program Effects Associated With Enforcement

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Total program	Effects of computer or administrative error	Number of fathers who, because of computer error or conversion of accounts, experience legal actions, such as mandatory withholding or lost tax refunds, which may result in expensive litigation, even though the father is current in his account
		Litigation costs arising from such errors
	Breadth of support payment participation	Increase in the proportion of cases yielding collections or arrears
	Timeliness of support payments	Proportion of payments received on time; arrears amounts paid
	Perceived fairness of enforcement technique and whether it improves compliance	Whether the individual thinks the enforcement technique is fair
		Differences in the rate of compliance (percentage of award amount paid and number of on-time payments per year) by perceived fairness
	Differential effects of various child support enforcement techniques	Comparison of the rates of compliance (percentage of award amount paid, on-time payments, arrears paid) across enforcement activities
Other program	Federal tax intercept related	
	Differential effects of tax intercepts on AFDC and non-AFDC cases[a]	For AFDC cases: Number of paying cases and collection amounts (where arrears are greater than $150)
		For non-AFDC cases: Number of paying cases and collection amounts (where arrears are greater than $500 and the child is not emancipated)
	Whether or not a state forgoes using the offset if other enforcement methods are being used and some collections are being made	Proportion of cases in which the tax offset is used, by whether other enforcement techniques have been implemented and some collections received
	Wage withholding related	
	Comparison of relative effectiveness between states that apply withholding to more types of income and sources	Differences in the percentage of total collections achieved through wage withholding
	Comparisons of wage withholding triggered by arrears and automatic wage withholding	Difference in average processing time required to gain collection
		Difference in percentage of paying cases
		Difference in amount of collections per case
	Comparison of effects experienced in states that use different service of notice processes	Differences in terms of ensuring that the service of notice is accomplished and that due process challenges do not succeed
	Perceived adequacy and fairness of the process in states using different types of contest processes	Differences in the types of contest mechanisms used, whether by litigation, administrative hearing or the like[b]
	Differential effectiveness between state and interstate wage withholding cases	Differences in per-case costs and collections between state and interstate cases

[a]The intercept program works for AFDC cases where the child may be emancipated; for non-AFDC cases, submissions on behalf of an individual who is no longer a minor, even if the arrearage accrued while the person was a minor, may not be submitted. One administrator claimed that there were 10 cases in his county where arrears totaled $57,000, yet the intercept could not be obtained because the child was no longer a minor.

[b]The type of process used to respond to contests of the withholding is an efficiency issue because it can be argued that contests need not be resolved by means of elaborate litigation.

Table VII.3: Public and Private Effects Associated With Enforcement

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Public	Tax payment avoidance behavior among absent parents whose tax (state or federal) has been intercepted	Obligor's reduction in amount of tax withheld from salary after experiencing an offset
Private	Enforcement activities' effect on an obligor's credit rating	Number of absent parents who are denied credit because of the imposition of automatic wage withholding, liens, wage garnishment, or credit agency reporting
		Improvement in full financial disclosure of absent parent's liabilities to creditors
	Effect on informal and voluntary agreements between parents regarding child support as a result of enforcement activities	The number of absent parents who halt informal or voluntary support (money or other) because of the imposition of a specific enforcement activity
	Social and psychological effects of automatic wage withholding on arrears and nonarrears cases	Change in on-time payer's views of reasonableness of enforcement technique and support amount
		Change in payer's employer's views of employee as in arrears
	Responsiveness of automatic wage withholding to changes in families' circumstances	Frequency of families' experiencing fluctuations in monthly financial need not met by regular payment schedule
		Frequency of fluctuating economic burden for families with joint or shared custody not met by regular payment schedule

unctional Description, Data Elements, and ndicators Related to Collections Processing

unctional Description

The IV-D agency is responsible for ensuring that all collection and distribution activities are accurate and timely. For instance, non-AFDC cases rely on the expeditious processing of checks from the absent parent. Child support agencies have case-monitoring systems, some automated and others manual, that identify the current payment status of IV-D accounts. This serves as the basis for identifying delinquent accounts and initiating subsequent enforcement actions. One estimate suggests that 25 percent of IV-D agency resources are spent on this processing and disbursement function.

The IV-D agency matches child support payments received, usually a check or money order, with the correct cases. Automated processing techniques have been instituted in some states to log in and process the payments. Automatic billing systems and delinquency notice systems are two automated techniques used for billing purposes. The automatic billing system involves the issuance of monthly bills to remind absent parents of each payment and its due date. Coupon booklets, most commonly used for monitoring commercial loan installment payments, may also be used in addition to regular monthly mailings.

Once support amounts are collected, both AFDC and non-AFDC child support collections are disbursed. For the AFDC cases, the IV-D agency notifies the IV-A agency of the support collection. The IV-A agency then reviews the information to determine the family's financial needs and whether the family continues to be eligible for welfare benefits. In the event that the AFDC case is closed, the IV-D agency will continue its collection efforts. Child support payments are transferred to the family for 5 months and continue thereafter unless the custodial parent requests the IV-D agency to close the case. For the non-AFDC cases, the IV-D agency acts as a collections agency and passes through the payment to the custodial parent within a specified time.

ata Elements

In this section, we provide some basic descriptive data about program and administrative matters related to collections processing. There are three primary uses for this information. First, it constitutes baseline data that will be useful for describing this particular functional activity or the total system. Second, these data will be used analytically to determine (1) the mix of cases and (2) the flow and magnitude of costs, benefits, and effects. Third, the data may be useful in framing the research questions for a study of the child support system.

Additional data elements might be necessary for a specific design or if the process is subdivided further. The data elements for this function include the following.

- Number of non-AFDC cases whose checks are processed;
- number of AFDC cases whose checks are processed;
- average number of days to process a check;
- number of payments made through automatic wage witholding;
- number of payments made by credit card.

Tables VIII.1-VIII.3 provide examples of indicators of outcomes associated with collections processing.

ble VIII.1: Costs Associated With llections Processing

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Program	Check processing and posting costs to the agency	Staff hours to process checks x salary per hour for AFDC disregard process and for non-AFDC collections
		Equipment costs of processing and posting checks
		Other costs
		Maintenance costs
Public	Clerk of court costs for handling collections	Staff time to process checks x salary per hour
Private	Costs of collections received through a credit card company, if applicable	Self-explanatory

ble VIII.2: Program Effects Associated th Collections Processing

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Total	Delays in refunding payments program incorrectly sent to the court or welfare agency when a family leaves AFDC	Average time to notify relevant agency that family moved off AFDC and should receive payments directly from absent parent
	Decrease in participation in IV-D program by non-AFDC clients because of delays in check processing	Number of potential non-AFDC clients who do not participate in the program because they perceive difficulties in receiving checks
		Number of non-AFDC clients who withdraw from the IV-D rolls because of difficulties in receiving checks
	Improvement in timeliness of support payments owing to agency oversight	Increase in proportion of payments made on time, among voluntary payers
Other program	Improvements in recordkeeping achieved through automating record of payments received	Change in timeliness and accuracy of payments and arrearages
		Amount of arrearages that can be documented and recovered

Table VIII.3: Private Effects Associated With Collections Processing

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Private	Non-AFDC cases only	
	Timeliness of receipt of child support payment by the custodial parent as a result of agency processing and posting	Difference between average time to receive check before and after institution of IV-D processing of payments
	Positive effects on families who know that payments will be processed, recorded, and disbursed by a child support agency	Whether the custodial parent perceives the future as being more or less secure because of this processing arrangement
		Whether the custodial parent perceives the noncustodial parent more or less favorably because this arrangement permits collections to be received with less contact and disturbance
		Amount of arrearages that can be documented and recovered
		Amount of absent parent overcharges avoided by accurate accounting
	Negative effects on the families of check processing delays	Difficulties experienced by the receiving family, such as — instability of income — necessity to seek public assistance — interest and other charges incurred to bridge late receipt of payment
		Number of inappropriate recordings of late payment and initiation of arrears sanctions
		Lost income of payer for time spent in defense of incorrect record of delayed payment
	AFDC cases only	
	Loss by AFDC mothers of their $50 disregard or arrears payments because of payment delays	Number of AFDC mothers who do not receive a monthly disregard because the payment was not timely
		Amount of disregard money lost because of untimely payments
		Number of AFDC mothers who do not receive an arrears payment because the payment was not timely
		Amount of arrears money lost because of untimely payments

Functional Description, Data Elements, and Indicators Related to Collections

Functional Description

The flow of collections within the IV-D system is determined by the case status of the recipient family, that is, whether it is an AFDC or a non-AFDC case. AFDC mothers assign their child support to the state, although they retain the first $50 collected in any given month. This is called the "$50 disregard," because it is not counted in the determination of AFDC benefits. Collections made by the IV-D agency on behalf of non-AFDC parents are disbursed in full (minus any fees) to that family.

The financial flow for the remaining balance of AFDC collections is somewhat more complex. The support payment is split between the federal and state governments based on their respective percentages of AFDC outlays. The federal financial participation (FFP) rate in the AFDC program varies between 50 and 79 percent of the welfare costs, depending on the state's per capita income. When a state collects support on behalf of an AFDC family, it returns the portion of the support payment to the federal government that corresponds to the FFP percentage for AFDC.

Financial flows also include federal incentive payments to the states depending on a state's performance in obtaining child support collections for both AFDC and non-AFDC cases. Ratios of AFDC and non-AFDC collections to total administrative costs form the basis of this incentive. As the state's "performance ratio" improves, the percentage of federal incentive payments to the state increases. The states receive incentives that range from 6 to 10 percent of both AFDC and non-AFDC collections. Federal incentive payments for AFDC and non-AFDC collections are computed in a similar way but separately to ensure equity in enforcement efforts. However, non-AFDC incentives are capped at 115 percent of the AFDC incentive payment (for example, if the non-AFDC incentive was calculated to be $2 million but the AFDC incentive was only $1 million, then the non-AFDC incentive payment will be restricted to $1.15 million).

Arrearages represent an unpaid support obligation and are the difference between the accrued support obligation and the amount actually paid by the absent parent. For AFDC cases, the mother assigns current support and any arrears to the state, which continue as long as the family remains in the program. If the family stops receiving AFDC, the mother regains her right to receive current payments. However, if there are arrears, the state may claim those arrears up to the amount paid out in AFDC. The process for non-AFDC families is somewhat different. If the family never received welfare, all child support collections are distributed to the family. However, if that family had received AFDC previously, collections go toward payment on the current month's obligation.

If any money is left, it is considered arrears and the state decides whether the arrears will be paid to the family or the state first.

Data Elements

In this section, we provide some basic descriptive data about program and caseload matters related to collections. There are three primary uses for this information. First, it constitutes baseline data that will be useful for describing this particular functional activity or the total system. Second, these data will be used analytically to determine (1) the mix of cases and (2) the flow and magnitude of costs, benefits, and effects. Third, the data may be useful in framing the research questions for a study of the child support system.

Additional data elements might be necessary for a specific design or if the process is subdivided further. The data elements for this function include the following.

Overall Collections

- Total collections;
- total AFDC caseload collections;
- total non-AFDC caseload collections;
- total amount of voluntary payments;
- total collections made on behalf of other states (interstate);
- total collections received from other states (interstate);
- amount of full IRS collections;
- total amount of the disregard ($50) disbursed to AFDC families.

Collections by Function:

Bonds and security deposits related:

- arrears collected through the mechanism of posting a bond or other security.

Credit agency reporting related:

- amount collected as a result of providing arrears information to a credit agency.

Federal tax intercept related:

- total amount of tax offset collections, by AFDC and non-AFDC cases.

Garnishment of wages related:

- amount of arrears collected through the garnishment of wages or other asset.

Liens related:

- amount of arrears collected through the mechanism of establishing a lien on real or personal property.

State tax intercept related:

- total amount of state intercept collections, by AFDC and non-AFDC cases.

Unemployment insurance intercept:

- amount of arrears collected through the unemployment insurance intercept, by AFDC and non-AFDC cases.

Wage withholding related:

- amount of arrears collected as a result of wage withholding, by AFDC and non-AFDC cases;
- amount of current collections as a result of wage withholding.

Tables IX.1-IX.4 provide examples of indicators of outcomes associated with actual collections.

Table IX.1: Costs Associated With Collections

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Program	Federal administrative costs[a]	Variable administrative costs of the program, including 90-10 money for systems development, national office expenses, audits, Medicaid matching rate, and so on (see administrative cost guidelines)
	State administrative costs (excluding court costs)[a]	Variable administrative costs of the program, minus federal financial participation and incentives, and fees paid by and costs recovered from non-AFDC clients[b]
Public	Other federal costs[a]	Other incidental costs
	Other state costs[a]	Other incidental costs
Private	Child support costs to the noncustodial parent	Child support payments
		Increase in medical insurance premium, if any, to the noncustodial parent for including the mother and child under an employer's health insurance plan (medical child support)

[a]For aggregate analysis only; do not factor in these budgeted costs if functional cost breakdowns (from appendixes III to VIII) are used because they will be loaded onto the personnel costs in each category.

[b]Certain states charge non-AFDC participants for certain services, such as tax intercepts. However, this is practiced by only selected states. The total amount collected in IV-D fees and cost recovery amounted to $7.3 million in fiscal year 1988.

Table IX.2: Benefits Associated With Collections

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Program	AFDC caseload only	
	Estimated benefit to the federal government from payments made by noncustodial parents (nonarrears)	Child support payment, less $50 for each applicable month in which disregard deducted. Federal and state shares determined according to a formula that assigns benefits according to the federal-state ratio of AFDC costs and the federal incentive payment to states based on the state's performance ratio[a]
	Estimated benefit to the state government from payments made by noncustodial parents (nonarrears)	See above
	Estimated benefit to the federal government when clients make the transition from public assistance	Difference between the federal incentive payments made to states for AFDC—compared with non-AFDC—collections minus the (previous) federal share of monthly support payments
	Estimated benefit to the state government when clients make the transition from public assistance	See above
	Estimated gain to the state from arrears payments	If arrears are owed to the state: arrears payment less $50 disregard for each prior month of AFDC receipt covered
	Non-AFDC caseload only	
	Estimated benefit (negative) to federal government through state incentive payments	Proportion of non-AFDC collections, based on the state's cost-to-collections ratio
	Estimated benefit (positive) to state government through federal incentive payments	See above
Public	Medicaid-only cases	
	Estimated benefit to the federal government as a result of collections in Medicaid-only cases	Percentage of the child support collection that accrues to the federal government
	Estimated benefit to the state government as a result of collections in Medicaid-only cases	Percentage of the child support collection that accrues to the state government
	AFDC caseload only	
	Estimated benefit to the federal government as a result of the transition of clients from public assistance	
	AFDC	AFDC cost per family x FFP percentage
	Medicaid	If < 1 year = 0; if > 1 year = Medicaid cost per AFDC family x FFP percentage
	Food stamps	+ 0.3 x child support received by custodial parent
	Estimated benefit to the state government as a result of the transition of clients from public assistance: AFDC, Medicaid	Same as above, except the state portion of cost avoidance benefits for AFDC and Medicaid is (1 − FFP percentage)

(continued)

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Public	Non-AFDC caseload only	
	Estimated amount of cost avoidance to the federal government as a result of keeping single-parent families off public assistance: AFDC, Medicaid, Food Stamps	Amount of public assistance custodial family would be entitled to receive if existing child support payments were hypothetically taken away. The formula for each individual case involves comparing the custodial parent's income against the AFDC asset test and award amount, and assuming the person was eligible (i.e., a cost avoidance case), computing the amount of public assistance to which eligible both with and without child support. Compute amounts for AFDC (x FFP percentage), Medicaid (x FFP percentage), and Food Stamps
	Estimated amount of cost avoidance to the state government as a result of keeping single-parent families off public assistance: AFDC, Medicaid	Same as above, except the state portion of cost avoidance benefits for AFDC and Medicaid is (1 − FFP percentage)
Private	AFDC caseload only	
	Amount of money received as a result of the $50 disregard for AFDC families	$50 pass-through x number of months received
	Decreases in other forms of public assistance because the $50 disregard is counted as income in other means-tested programs	Amount of reduction in Food Stamp payments
		Rent increases in low-income housing
		Decrease in general (county or state) assistance
	Estimated gain to custodial family from arrears payments	Arrears payment minus arrears owed to the state if any (less disregard per month of prior AFDC receipt covered)
	Non-AFDC caseload only	
	Amount of collections (current and arrears—less cost recovered from the state for expenses) families received	Self-explanatory (but separately count collections received by non-IV-D cases)
	Cost savings to the custodial family as result of receiving medical child support	Value of monthly health insurance premium
		Amount of medical payments, less deductible and copayments
	Collections received, by mode of enforcement — Bonds and security deposits — Credit agency reporting — Federal tax intercept — Garnishment of wages — Liens — State tax intercept — Unemployment insurance — Wage withholding	For each mode of enforcement, total amount of collections and average amount per case affected[b]

[a]Federal and state shares are determined according to the following formula: FED = (monthly payment − $50) x A − B x (monthly payment); and ST = (monthly payment − $50) x (100 − A) + B x (monthly payment), where A = percent of AFDC costs paid by the federal government (FFP) and B = federal incentive payment percentage based on state AFDC collections-to-cost ratio (incentive ranges from 6 percent to 10 percent).

[b]Accruals go to the state if the case was formerly on AFDC and distributed to both the state and federal governments; the remainder goes to the family.

Table IX.3: Program Effects Associated With Collections

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Total program	Effects of enforcement activities on compliance with payment amounts and schedules	Differences in the average proportion of award paid per month and the number of on-time payments per year by individuals before and after implementation of a child support enforcement activity
	Whether enforcement is more effective in altering the dollars received than the chances of receiving payments	Differences in the average payment amount per month by individuals who make a payment, and the percentage of cases paying, before and after implementation of a child support enforcement activity
	Influence on whether a custodial parent applies for public assistance	For non-AFDC cases, comparison of the rate of public assistance application between AFDC-eligible mothers who receive and do not receive child support
	Promote parental responsibility in caring for the financial welfare of their children	Increase in the number of voluntary support orders among the divorced population
		Increase in the number of voluntary paternity admissions
		Increase in the percentage of paying cases and the proportion of award paid in both the AFDC and non-AFDC caseloads
		Reduction in proportion of caseload requiring enforcement activities

Table IX.4: Private Effects Associated With Collections

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Private	Deterrent effects on families outside the IV-D program	Increase in support orders established at time of divorce decree
		Increase in regularity of child support payments outside the program
		Increase in percentages of all custodial parents awarded and receiving support
	Maintenance of kinship bonds and regular contacts between fathers and children	Increase in number or regularity of father-child contacts
		Increase in informal assistance provided to the custodial parent or child
		Increase in the contacts with or assistance provided by the noncustodial parent's kin
	The effects of making payments on noncustodial parents	Change in income status relative to the poverty threshold
		Change in the earnings or employment status of the noncustodial parent attributable to making support payments
		Change in the residential mobility of the noncustodial parent attributable to enforcement
		Change in the likelihood of the noncustodial parent to remarry

(continued)

Domain	Indicator	Measure
Private	The effect of child support on the psychological functioning of the custodial and noncustodial parents	Whether the parents individually exhibit a higher level of psychological function or dysfunction as a result of child support payment
		Whether the two parents exhibit psychological stress over the marital dissolution
		Extent of parents' conflict over the regularity and amount of payments
	Income effects on the custodial parent	Change in income status relative to the poverty threshold
		Differences in participation in the labor force by custodial parents who receive regular, complete child support payments versus irregular, incomplete payments
		Whether an AFDC mother decides to leave public assistance because of the prospect of regular child support payments
		Change in residential stability of the custodial family receiving payments
	Effects of support payments on children's well-being	The level of psychological adjustment of children whose parent receives child support
		Level of activities and interests outside the home among children whose parent receives child support
		Whether the relationship between the child and the noncustodial parent is positive or negative in view of the payment or nonpayment of child support
	Effects on children's educational attainment	Years of education attained
		Whether the child was unable to attend a school of higher education because of insufficient family income owing to the absence or low level of child support
	Effects of child support payments on second families	Change in likelihood of custodial parent to remarry
		Loss in income to the custodial parent if that parent remarries
		Change in the payments level by the noncustodial parent if that parent remarries

Expert Reviewers of the Framework

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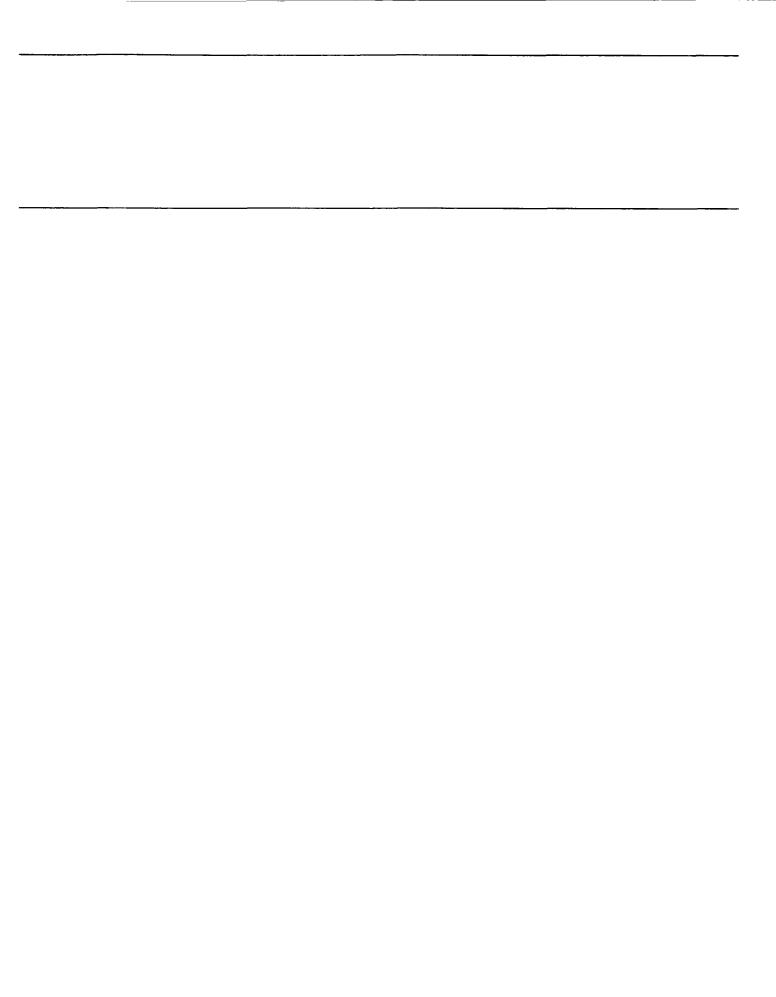
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